A GRALLA PUBLICATION

SEPTEMBER 1984

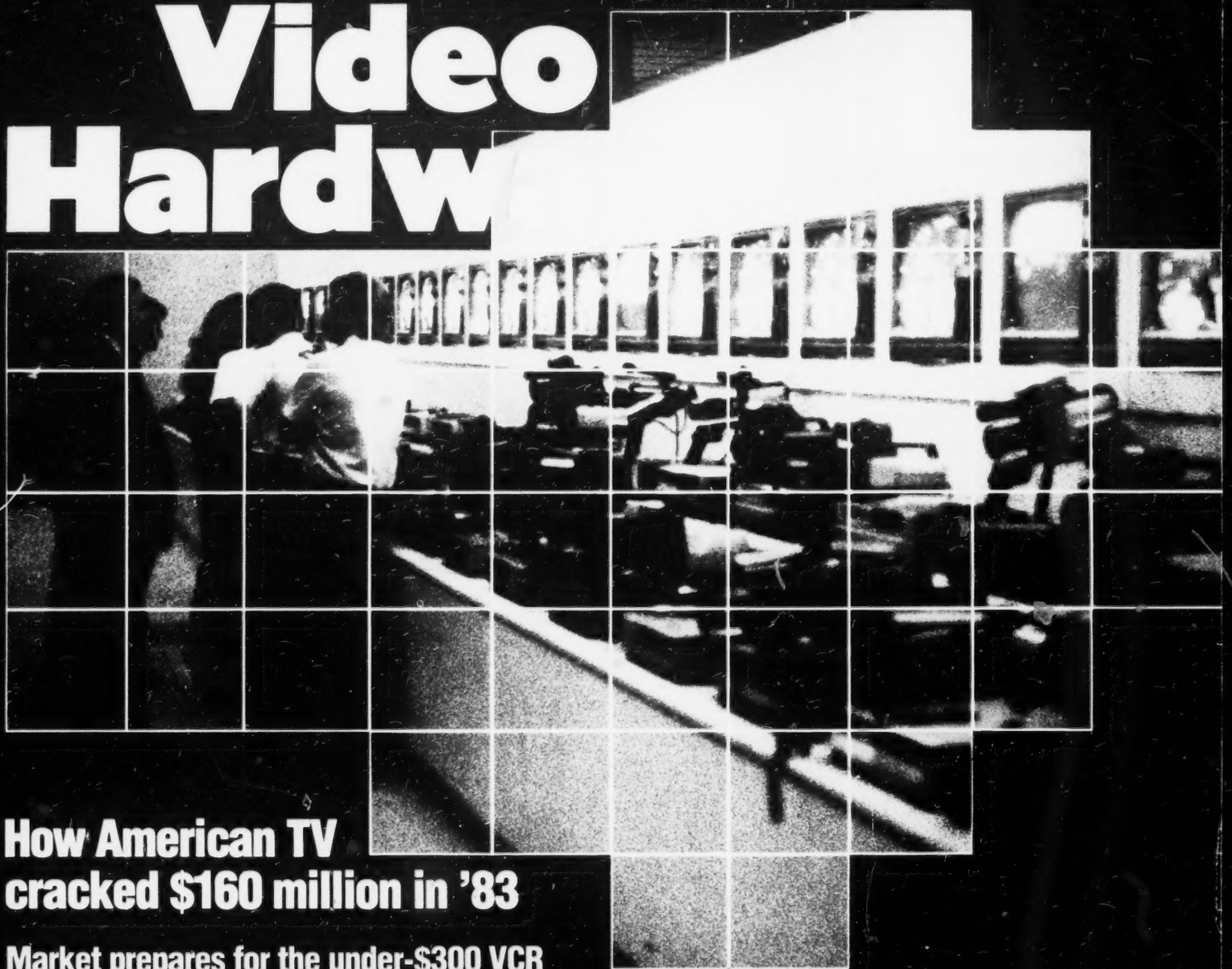
Merchandising

Home and Auto Electronics • Housewares • Major Appliances

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR HARDGOODS RETAILERS, WHOLESALERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Retailers build the best year ever in...

Video Hardw



How American TV cracked $160 million in '83

Market prepares for the under-$300 VCR

What's available in stereo televisions?

Asimov and others predict the future of home video

In search of the perfect projection TV salesperson

Also in this issue:

- Competition picks up in the $1.5 billion rent-to-own industry
- What's hot in housewares?
- Some stores turn their backs on low-end computers
- New appliance colors generate interest and confusion at retail
- Commodore prepares for life beyond the 64

A GRALLA PUBLICATION
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MERCHANDISING (USPS 104-810) (ISSN 0362-3920) is published monthly by Gralla Publications, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Telephone (212) 869-1300. Circulated free of charge to individuals involved in the retailing of major appliances, housewares and consumer electronics. All other U.S. subscriptions $33.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions $55.00 per year. Single copies $4.00 except for March and July issues $15.00. Second Class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: Write to MERCHANDISING, Circulation Department, Room 930, 1501 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Change-of-address notices should be sent promptly, provide old as well as new address, include ZIP code number and address label from recent issue. Please allow one month for change of address to become effective.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MERCHANDISING, Circulation Department, Room 930, 1501 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. Second Class postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices.

MERCHANDISING is a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

CURRENT AND BACK COPIES of Merchandising and Merchandising Week are available in microfilm from University Microfilm, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Merchandising
FOR OVER 56,200 RETAILERS & WHOLESALERS

September 1984
Our 77th Year
Vol. 9, No. 9

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Home healthcare heads list of strong sellers

By Michael Garry, associate editor

NEW YORK—What's hot this year in housewares? While your cash register may have already told you, *Merchandising* offers herewith an unofficial industrywide tally of the products that are scoring the greatest success in 1984.

Based on conversations with key manufacturers throughout the housewares industry, the study (summarized in the chart to the right) points to rapid growth in certain areas, including home healthcare products, ultrasonic humidifiers and travel irons. Hand-held vacuums continue their impressive rise, while microwave cookware, gas grills and security timers also are exercising a strong pull on consumers' dollars. Meanwhile, a relatively new product—the combination heater/fan—has jumped into contention as one of the year's hottest products.

Other housewares items also are growing at a healthy, if less spectacular, rate. Chief among these are space-saving kitchen electrics, which have breathed new life into the can opener and coffee maker categories. Meanwhile, many other kitchen appliances are faring well and personal care products continue to register modest gains.

Home healthcare booms

Hotter than most housewares items this year are home healthcare products, especially blood pressure meters and digital thermometers and scales. This category has been propelled by spiraling health costs, an aging population and greater health consciousness.

Shipments of digital thermometers alone are expected to rocket 150 percent this year. "A digital thermometer is as different from a traditional analog unit as a refrigerator is from an icebox," said William Lenahan, manager, healthcare division, Norelco.

Consumers, he added, are starting to appreciate the benefits offered by digital models, such as speed, accuracy, legibility and durability.

"Because analog units are easy to lose or break," he noted, "consumers tend to buy two to three a year. But digital units are geared to last five to seven years, so their price value is obvious."

Digital scales are also profiting from an interest in home healthcare, with shipments expected to rise 33.3 percent to three million units. "There are 60 million mechanical units out there," Lenahan noted, "and many consumers will eventually replace them with digital models. Our only problem is being able to produce enough."

Meanwhile, the blood pressure monitor—considered the cornerstone of the category—should reach two million units this year, a rise of 42.8 percent. Vendors are striving to reach the millions of Americans who suffer from some form of high blood pressure and could greatly benefit from monitoring themselves.

Ultrasonic humidifier soars

Another high flier this year is the ultrasonic humidifier. Shipments of the product are expected to jump to 50,000 units—a whopping 83 percent increase.

"The public perceives this product as an advancement over traditional humidifiers," said Howard Lorsan, vice president of marketing of Welbilt. "The ultrasonic device is silent and offers a high-tech look which appeals to people."

Bill Irvine, vice president of sales and marketing, Northern Electric, pointed out that while the ultrasonic humidifier is considered expensive now, the recent entry of numerous vendors is likely to cause price points to plummet at retail. "On a promotional basis, the price of a unit should be a third less than it was last year," he said.

A product whose success over the past few years has carried into 1984 is the hand-held vacuum. A 20 percent increase in shipments is expected, bringing total units to six million.

"The hand-held has become the second vacuum for many consumers," said Cliff Wood, marketing services manager, Hoover. "This has caused sales of uprights and sticks to be replaced by sales of hand-held models."

But Wood added that 1984 may be the peak year for this product; he predicted that unit shipments will dip to 4½ to five million units during the next two years. "This year, all the manufacturers are heavily promoting this item, even adding on rebates," he noted. "But this activity should diminish by next year."

It's no secret that sales of products designed for travel have been red hot in the housewares marketplace. In travel irons alone, a 15 percent increase in shipments is expected, boosting the total to a million units.

One company, Sanyei, has reported a 300 percent increase in unit shipments of travel irons for the firm this year.

Other travel appliances, like steamers and travel clocks, are also doing well. And converters and adaptors are gaining importance as accessories in the travel category.

Closer to home, the grill market continues to undergo some basic transformation. Gas units are emerging as the clear winners in a field that includes charcoal and electric grills; shipments of the gas models are expected to leap 20.3 percent to a total of 2,820,000.

"Gas grills are by far the most rapidly growing segment of the grill industry," said Tom Welch, president, Sunbeam Leisure Products. "They command the lion's share of retail promotional activities and advertising dollars. Much of this is at the expense of charcoal and electric units."

Indeed, charcoal grills, while still the largest segment of the market, are expected to drop off slightly to 10.5 million units. Electric grills are projected to edge up to 100,000 units shipped.

With barbecuing going on in the backyard, programmable timers are increasingly being used to create a "lived in" look inside the house. An impressive 17.5 percent increase is expected, bringing shipments to 5,600,000 units this year.

According to Jim Serra, consumer products sales and marketing manager, AMF/Paragon, the growth is coming in electronic wall and plug-in timers at the expense of electromechanical units, which are actually down in shipments. "The electronic models are more efficient, simpler to

(Continued on page 16)

WHAT'S HOT?

Products expected to generate significant increases in unit sales this year.

	Projected '84 unit sales to dealers (in thousands)	% Change from '83
Hand-held Vacuums	6,000	+20.0%
Travel Irons	1,000	+15.0%
Ultrasonic Humidifiers	150	+83.0%
Fan/Heater Combinations	500	NA
Gas Grills	2,820	+20.3%
Blood Pressure Monitors	2,000	+42.8%
Digital Thermometers	1,250	+150.0%
Digital Scales	3,000	+33.3%
Microwave Cookware	24,826	+17.5%
Timers	5,600	+17.5%

All figures gathered from housewares manufacturers.

CAN OPENERS AND COFFEE MAKERS are two of the products in the space-saving appliance category that are experiencing increasing sales this year, report many housewares vendors.

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WHAT'S HOT IN HOUSEWARES?

DEMAND FOR MICROWAVE cookware and accessories is expected to result in a 17.5 percent increase in shipments during 1984.

Lower prices help spur electronic timer growth

(Continued from page 15)

use and more aesthetically pleasing," he said. "Besides that, price points have dropped dramatically from what they were three years ago."

With saturation for microwave ovens reaching 33 percent, the demand for cookware and accessories has predictably increased. An expected 17.5 percent rise in shipments this year will put total units (including plastic, ceramic, stoneware, glass and others) at 24,826,000 units.

"The introduction of compact microwaves has expanded the market," commented Mark Donlon, product manager, microwave, Regal Ware. "The ovens are simpler to use, and consumers are more at ease with them. This has created a demand for additional products."

Tom Brust, marketing manager, Nordic Ware, noted that consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about microwave cooking and are beginning to experiment. "The ovens are not just being used to heat a cup of coffee," he said, adding that beefed-up advertising and promotions by manufacturers are helping to stir excitement.

In the heaters category, the combination heater/fan has emerged this year as "the glamour product of the industry," said Jerry Jacques, director of sales, National Presto. The product is expected to hit the half million mark in shipments.

"Everybody's jumping on the bandwagon with this product," said Jacques. "It fills consumers' needs at the right price." Jim McCusker, president of DeLonghi America, called it "very modern, small, portable and multifunctional."

The oil-filled heater, meanwhile, has received favorable reviews. Lorsan of Welbilt described the product as being up 20 percent industrywide in shipments over last year. "The item was hot last year because there was nothing of consequence competing with it," he said. This year, the heater should continue to do well, and retail prices should be down, he added.

Space-savers catch on

The growth in the coffee maker and can opener categories is being at least partly attributed to the impact space-saving units are having on the market. Sunbeam's vice president of marketing, Paul Saxton, said that sales of under-the-cabinet coffee makers have doubled the firm's expectations.

The space-saving can opener has been a "big hit" for Sunbeam, Saxton said. He predicted a 10 percent growth in the category industrywide, largely on the strength of the under-the-cabinet units.

A surprising favorite among many kitchen electrics vendors is the iron. Bolstered by introductions boasting electronic safety features, manufacturers are projecting as much as a 20 percent growth in shipments this year.

Said Saxton: "We've shipped four to six times as many electronic Monitor irons as we thought we would. Distribution is everywhere, and the product is selling off the shelf even without promotions. Apparently, there was a pent-up demand for a 'safe' iron. This type of product has expanded the whole category and raised price points."

In other kitchen electrics, the fry-pan and toaster-oven look to be healthy categories this year. For the sake of convenience and speed in food preparation, consumers appear to be turning to these devices, vendors said. Norelco's Moeller projected a 10 percent growth in shipments of toaster-oven-broilers.

In cookware, some manufacturers believe stainless steel and aluminum have been fairly flat in the first half, but should pick up steam in the second half of the year. This could lead to increases in shipments of stainless steel of between 10 and 20 percent.

Meanwhile, personal care products have turned in a modest performance this year. Carola Crowley, manager, beauty care division, Norelco, predicted five to six percent increases in shipments for both hair dryers and curling irons/brushes and a 10 percent rise for makeup mirrors.

The high saturation rate in personal care prevents it from being a booming category, said Anne Sakalay, product marketing manager for Sunbeam. A large percentage of the business comes from replacement purchases.

"We need revolutionary innovations—not just product enhancements—to create real growth in the market," she said.

Housewares Trendings appears on page 10

Merchandising's TOP 50 FIFTY

Top 30 in videocassette rentals

TITLE	Last month's position	Months on chart
1. The Right Stuff *(Warner)* GP	3	2
2. The Big Chill *(RCA/Columbia)*	—	1
3. Terms of Endearment *(Paramount)*	1	3
4. Educating Rita *(RCA/Columbia)*	7	2
5. Blame It On Rio *(Vestron)*	12	2
6. Scarface *(MCA)*	2	3
7. Silkwood *(Embassy)*	4	3
8. Tank *(MCA)* GP	21	2
9. Lassiter *(Warner)*	—	1
10. Children of the Corn *(Embassy)*	9	2
11. Uncommon Valor *(Paramount)*	10	4
12. Unfaithfully Yours *(CBS/Fox)*	—	1
13. Christine *(RCA/Columbia)*	5	3
14. Sudden Impact *(Warner)* GP	8	5
15. Gorky Park *(Vestron)*	6	4
16. Broadway Danny Rose *(Vestron)*	18	2
17. All the Right Moves *(CBS/Fox)* GP	11	3
18. Vertigo *(MCA)*	27	2
19. Harry and Son *(Vestron)*	—	1
20. Two of a Kind *(CBS/Fox)*	19	2
21. Rear Window *(MCA)*	15	3
22. Raiders of the Lost Ark *(Paramount)*	14	9
23. The Dead Zone *(Paramount)*	16	5
24. Where's Poppa? *(Key Video)*	20	2
25. Trading Places *(Paramount)*	16	6
26. Romantic Comedy *(CBS/Fox)*	—	1
27. Under Fire *(Vestron)*	17	5
28. D.C. Cab *(MCA)* GP	28	5
29. Repo Man *(MCA)*	—	1
30. Mr. Mom *(Vestron)*	13	7

Top 10 in videocassette sales

1. Jane Fonda's Workout *(Karl Home Video)* GPI	2	20
2. Terms of Endearment *(Paramount)*	1	3
3. Mickey *(Walt Disney)*	3	3
4. The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller *(Vestron)* GP	4	8
5. The Big Chill *(RCA/Columbia)*	—	1
6. Raiders of the Lost Ark *(Paramount)*	5	10
7. Scarface *(MCA)*	9	3
8. Donald *(Walt Disney)*	6	2
9. Do It Debbie's Way *(Video Associates)*	—	3
10. Vertigo *(MCA)*	—	1

Top 5 in CED videodisc sales

1. Scarface *(MCA)*	1	3
2. Christine *(Paramount)*	3	2
3. Silkwood *(Embassy)*	5	2
4. Terms of Endearment *(Paramount)*	2	2
5. Children of the Corn *(Embassy)*	—	1

Top 5 in laserdisc sales

1. Terms of Endearment *(Paramount)*	2	2
2. Scarface *(MCA)*	3	3
3. The Right Stuff *(Warner)*	1	2
4. Raiders of the Lost Ark *(Paramount)*	—	7
5. Lassiter *(Warner)*	—	1

G—Title has gone gold—has sold 25,000 on disc and/or cassette and has sales of at least $1 million. (RIAA/Video)
P—Title has gone platinum—has sold 50,000 on disc and/or cassette and has sales of at least $2 million. (RIAA/Video)
I—Golden Videocassettes award—has audited return of sales or rentals of $1 million unless company has a return policy. Then, the allowance must be deducted from the gross revenue. (ITA)

VIDEO/NEW RELEASES

CBS/FOX VIDEO

EL NORTE Two young Indians, a brother and a sister, travel from their remote Guatamalan village to the promised land—Los Angeles. When Enrique and Rosa reach Los Angeles, their struggle continues—they must learn to exist in an alien culture. The film is in Spanish with English subtitles. *Color 141 minutes R C: $59.95.*

YENTL Barbara Streisand portrays a courageous young woman whose educational freedom leads her into an unorthodox adventure. Disguised as a man, she enters a Yeshiva (an orthodox school) where she befriends a fellow student, Avigdor (Mandy Patinkin). The film is based on Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story, Yentl, the Yeshiva Boy. *Color 134 minutes PG Beta hifi VHS hifi C: $79.98.*

EMBASSY

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND (1979) Ten-year-old Brian faces the inequities of the adult world as he grows up in a small town during the Depression. The film is a loving portrait of childhood. *Color 102 minutes.*

FAMILY HOME ENTERTAINMENT

BLACKSTAR (Vol. III) John Blackstar continues his sagas of fighting for forces of evil. Fantasy and adventure highlight this film. *Color Beta hifi VHS stereo C: $29.95.*

GUMBY FOR PRESIDENT (Vol. IX) "Think green—don't be a dumby, vote for Gumby" is this character's presidential campaign slogan. The green man represents the Fun and Family party with a campaign promise of fun for the whole family. *Color Beta hifi VHS stereo C: $29.95.*

MCA

ICEMAN (1984) Man's ancient mysteries and the futuristic world of frozen immortality come together in this unusual drama starring Timothy Hutton with Lindsay Crouse and John Lone as the 40,000-year-old iceman who wakes up in a modern world. When a team of scientists finds a preserved prehistoric man in Arctic ice, they succeed in bringing him back to life. *Color 101 minutes PG Beta hifi VHS Stereo C: $69.95 LV: $29.98.*

SIXTEEN CANDLES (1984) John Hughes wrote and directed this warmhearted tale of Samantha Baker's sweet sixteen. Teenager Samantha (Molly Ringwald) copes with creepy freshmen, a spoiled sister's wedding, confused parents and the big blond on campus who stands between her and the boy of her dreams. *Color 93 minutes PG Beta hifi C: $79.95.*

MGM/UA

HAVE I GOT A STORY FOR YOU Shari Lewis and superstar puppets Lamb Chop, Charley Horse and Hush Puppy return to the screen again. The gang is babysitting for a pygmy chimp who is driving them bananas. *Color 60 minutes C: $29.95.*

MAKING THE GRADE (1984) Meet Judd Nelson as Eddie Keaton. He owes big bucks to hoods and, as a street kid from New Jersey, is desperately looking for a way out. Eddie is invited to pose as super-preppy Palmer Woodrow III (a rich slob who prefers to do just about anything over going to school). But can he make the grade? *Color 105 minutes Beta hifi C: $79.95.*

PARAMOUNT

RACING WITH THE MOON Elizabeth McGovern and Sean Penn star in this bittersweet tale of lost innocence and the trauma of growing up too fast. The film chronicles the story of Henry "Hopper" Nash (Penn) and his buddy Nicky (Nicholas Cage) enjoying their last boyish exploits before going off to World War II. *Color C: $59.95 LV: $29.95 CED: $29.95.*

RCA/COLUMBIA

THE DRESSER Albert Finney portrays Sir, an actor/manager and Tom Courtenay is his dresser Norman, who has dedicated his life to Sir and the theater. The film is rich in comedy and compassion. *Color 119 minutes PG Beta hifi C: $79.95.*

ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS: THE MOVIE David Bowie is featured in this classic rock film which includes the hit songs Changes, Space Oddity and Ziggy Stardust. The film is a Mainman production in association with Pennabaker Associates, Inc. *Color 90 minutes Beta hifi C: $29.95.*

WALT DISNEY

ANIMAL QUIZ (Vol. IV) Children and parents test their animal expertise and rate themselves either Wildlife Beginner, Wildlife Tracker or Wildlife Expert following the test on all volumes of Animal Quiz. This volume includes Secrets of the Desert, Shark and Masai Riddle. *Color 84 minutes C: $39.95.*

WARNER

SWING SHIFT (1984) Goldie Hawn plays a World II California housewife who enters the workforce after her husband enlists. During her work days in an aircraft plant, she acquires a new best friend (Christine Lahti), a new romance (Kurt Russell) and a new self-assurance that characterized women during the war. *Color 100 minutes PG C: $79.95 LV: $34.98.*